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U.S. Citizenship
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Services

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FILE: WAC 02 266 50945 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date: FEB 5 2004

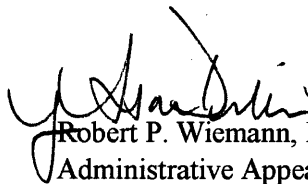
IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary:

PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the
Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.


Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The service center director denied the nonimmigrant visa petition and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

The petitioner is an optometry and ophthalmology clinic that seeks to employ the beneficiary as a medical research assistant. The petitioner endeavors to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101 (a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition because the proffered position is not a specialty occupation. On appeal, counsel submits a brief and other documentation.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1184 (i)(1), defines the term "specialty occupation" as an occupation that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;
- (2) The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;
- (3) The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or
- (4) The nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) interprets the term "degree" in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position.

The record of proceeding before the AAO contains: (1) Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for additional evidence; (3) the petitioner's response to the director's request; (4) the director's denial letter; and (5) Form I-290B and supporting documentation. The AAO reviewed the record in its entirety before issuing its decision.

The petitioner is seeking the beneficiary's services as a medical research assistant. Evidence of the beneficiary's duties includes: the I-129 petition; the petitioner's letter in support of the petition; and the petitioner's response to the director's request for evidence. According to this evidence, the beneficiary would

perform duties that entail interviewing and examining patients and reading medical literature in order to inform the eye care practitioners of new developments in the field and in order to suggest treatment options.

The director found that the proffered position was not a specialty occupation because the job duties are not actually those of a medical researcher; rather they involve highlighting the medical research of others. The director concluded that the petitioner failed to establish any of the criteria found at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

On appeal, counsel states that the proffered position requires the application of complex knowledge which is associated with at least a bachelor's degree level education. Counsel asserts that the petitioner is engaged in research and that the beneficiary must have specialized knowledge of medicine in order to conduct the research. Upon review of the record, however, the petitioner has established none of the four criteria outlined in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A). Therefore, the proffered position is not a specialty occupation.

The AAO turns first to the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) and (2): a baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is the normal minimum requirement for entry into the particular position; a degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations; or a particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree.

Factors often considered by CIS when determining these criteria include: whether the Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook (Handbook)* reports that the industry requires a degree; whether the industry's professional association has made a degree a minimum entry requirement; and whether letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry attest that such firms "routinely employ and recruit only degreed individuals." *See Shanti, Inc. v. Reno*, 36 F. Supp. 2d 1151, 1165 (D.Min. 1999)(quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Slattery*, 764 F. Supp. 872, 1102 (S.D.N.Y. 1991)).

The AAO routinely consults the *Handbook* for its information about the duties and educational requirements of particular occupations. Although the job title suggests that the proffered position is akin to that of a medical researcher, a detailed examination of the *Handbook's* description of the medical researcher position reveals that it is different. A bachelor's degree would be the minimum requirement in order to enter into the field of medical research, per the *Handbook*. According to the 2002-2003 edition of the *Handbook* on page 219, it appears that the main focus of such researchers is on finding solutions to very specific problems, or answers to very specific questions. The solutions or answers which they seek, however, have a broad application rather than an individual scope. The goals of medical researchers are not necessarily the same as those of medical practitioners, who diagnose individuals and seek solutions for those particular patients.

The duties of the proffered position appear to be focused on individual patient care. The research involved, consisting of speaking with patients and reading medical literature, is the type of research done by doctors and their staff in order to treat patients. This is not the type of research contemplated by the *Handbook* in reference to the researcher positions. The literature the beneficiary would read, in fact, publishes the work of the medical scientists conducting studies in laboratories and clinical facilities. There is no information on record to indicate that this is the type of work to be performed in the proffered position.

The duties of the proffered position appear similar in kind and in level of responsibility to those of a nurse or medical assistant. The position's decision-making and analytical responsibilities do not appear to be on par with those of a medical scientist, for example. According to the *Handbook*, nurses and medical assistants do not require bachelor's degrees. The director concluded correctly that the proffered position does not require a baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent, in a specific specialty.

Regarding parallel positions in the petitioner's industry, the petitioner submitted Internet job postings for similarly titled positions. There is no evidence, however, to show that the employers issuing those postings are similar to the petitioner, or that the advertised positions are parallel to the instant position. Thus, the advertisements have little relevance. The record also does not include any evidence from professional associations regarding an industry standard, or documentation to support the complexity or uniqueness of the proffered position. The petitioner has, thus, not established the criteria set forth at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) or (2).

The AAO now turns to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(3) – the employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position. The petitioner has not previously hired any medical research assistants, thus it is unable to support this criterion.

Finally, the AAO turns to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(iii)(A)(4) – the nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree. To the extent that they are depicted in the record, the duties do not appear so specialized or complex that they could not be performed by a nurse or experienced medical assistant. The level of responsibility and complexity described does not require the highly specialized knowledge associated with a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent, in a specific specialty. Therefore, the evidence does not establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4).

As related in the discussion above, the petitioner has failed to establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation. Accordingly, the AAO shall not disturb the director's denial of the petition.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not sustained that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.